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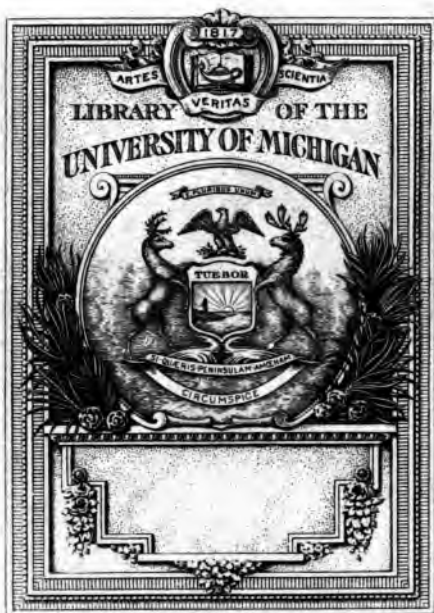
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NOTE ON THE DRAWINGS

IN THE POSSESSION OF

THE EARL OF DARTMOUTH

ILLUSTRATING

The Battle of Sole Bay

MAY 28, 1672

AND

The Battle of the Terel

AUGUST 11, 1673

BY

JULIAN S. CORBETT, LL.M.



PRINTED FOR THE NAVY RECORDS SOCIETY

MDCCCCVIII

A

NOTE ON THE DRAWINGS

This pain. and 10 plates, are
vol. 34. Navy records society.

ILLUSTRATING

The Battle of Sole Bay

MAY 28, 1672

AND

*These Drawings of the BATTLES OF SOLE
BAY AND THE TEXEL, announced for last
year, have been unavoidably delayed, and are now
issued on the 1907 subscription.*

June 1908.

PRINTED FOR THE NAVY RECORDS SOCIETY
MDCCCCVIII

PREFATORY NOTE

FOR the superintendence of the reproduction of the drawings the Society is indebted to Mr. W. Graham Greene, C.B., and Commander Herbert Richmond, R.N. In endeavouring to arrive at the origin and authenticity of the drawings the Editor has received invaluable assistance from Mr. Sidney Colvin, Keeper of the Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, and from Mr. Laurence Binyon of the same department, and from Dr. P. Haverkorn van Rijsewijk of the Boymans Museum at Rotterdam, who has been good enough to compare Lord Dartmouth's drawings with those in his keeping and to furnish some notes. Sir John Knox Laughton has kindly assisted with the proofs and with many suggestions.

M F M

The chief authorities consulted are :

Official letters and papers in the Record Office, which are very fully given in the *Domestic Calendars*, vols. xii to xv.

Narratives and journals of officers engaged, amongst Lord Dartmouth's MSS., many of which are printed wholly or in part in the *Historical MSS. Commission Reports* thereon.

Copies of official naval papers in the Pepys *Naval Collections* in the *Admiralty Library*.

Gerard Brandt's *Vie de Michel de Reuter* (French Edition). Amsterdam, 1698.

J. C. de Jonge, Archivarius van het Rijk. *Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche Zeewezen* (Hist. of the Dutch Navy). Amsterdam, 1837.

French official documents printed by Eugène Sue, *Histoire de la Marine Française*. Paris, 1835.

Dr. Haverkorn van Rijsewijk's articles on the Van de Veldes in *Oud Holland*, vol. xx.

I

ORIGIN AND AUTHORITY OF THE DRAWINGS

OF the origin of these drawings, which Lord Dartmouth has so generously placed at the disposal of the Society for reproduction, nothing is known definitely. Certain facts, however, have been ascertained which appear to connect them in some way with William Van de Velde the Elder, though all experts are agreed they cannot be actually by his hand. There is, indeed, in Lord Dartmouth's collection of naval actions a drawing of the same character as those of Sole Bay and the Texel, which puts the matter beyond dispute. It represents the destruction of the Spanish-Dutch fleet at Palermo by the French in 1676. It has all the marks of Van de Velde's work, and is clearly by a more masterly hand than the present drawings.

Still, there is strong evidence to show that, directly or indirectly, they originated in the Master's studio. The elder Van de Velde began life as a sailor, but having developed a high talent for marine drawing and made it his profession, he was employed by his Government during the Second Dutch War to accompany the fleet as a special artist. A whole series of monochrome sketches of the actions, which he made from his yacht, are in the British Museum. They are all actual sketches from nature, and not bird's-eye views like all but the first of the present drawings.

During the Third War he was similarly employed by the Dutch Government, was present at Sole Bay and at both the Schooneveld actions, and executed of each a series of sketches from the Dutch point of view. Of each of the Schooneveld actions he did six drawings, and all these are in the Boymans Museum at Rotterdam. How many he did of the Sole Bay campaign is uncertain. Four are in the British Museum, all done from the

6 VAN DE VELDE'S SKETCHES

Dutch side. No. 1 represents the fleet sailing from the Schooneveld. No. 2, the period of the action about 9.30, when Sandwich got clear of Brakel. No. 3, 'from 10 to 12,' when the Duke of York's flag was in the St. Michael. It is covered with notes in Van de Velde's hand, and has been corrected under the eye of the Duke of York. His flag has been changed from the London, where Van de Velde had originally drawn it, to the St. Michael. The Joshua has been sketched in, sinking under Jordan's fire, and the correct time is noted in another hand, 'This view about noon.' No. 4 is shortly after noon. Upon this Van de Velde has noted, 'I was cut off by the blue squadron, so that I had to draw from a distance De Ruyter and what was happening round him.' He also notes, 'The Staveren [which was captured] here gets deep into the game.' No. 5 is from 2 to 5 o'clock. Both fleets are coming down upon Van de Velde's galliot in the foreground. This drawing also has been corrected, and the Duke's flag shown in the London instead of the St. Michael, 'as the Duke of York himself instructed me.'

There also exists in the Boymans Museum a second set of four done by Van de Velde from the English point of view, the first three corresponding to the first three of the British Museum set. The time of the fourth is not given, but in the background the French are seen in action with the Zeeland squadron. Later there has been written upon it, 'about 2 P.M.,' and Van de Velde notes, it was 'marked by the Duke of York with his own hand on Saturday, two weeks after the first Saturday, and I, standing by him, wrote under his instruction beside each ship its name.' Another sketch exactly corresponding with this one is in the Print Collection at Leyden, but it is a bird's-eye view, and upon it Van de Velde has noted, 'This is in itself correct and historical, but arranged with a higher horizon to oblige the King and Duke, and in a manner suitable for tapestry.'¹

Here, then, we get the fact that Van de Velde did prepare for the English Court at least one bird's-eye view from his original sketches of Sole Bay for the tapestry makers to work from.

That such tapestries were executed by Francis Poyntz at Mortlake we know, and three of the pieces are hanging at Hampton Court. The most important represents the approach of the Dutch at sunrise. The allied fleet is represented to the left at anchor in Sole Bay. At the top the Dutch fleet is appearing over the horizon, and midway to the right three cruisers are making the long-distance signal for an enemy's fleet as laid down in the Duke of York's Sailing Instructions. Another piece

¹ For the drawings in Holland see *Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche Zeewesen*, 1837; vol. iii. part i. p. 142, note, and the recent and exhaustive study by Dr. P. Haverkorn van Rijsewijk in *Oud Holland*, vol. xx.

AND THE POYNTZ TAPESTRIES 7

represents a stage of the action when the French are disappearing in the distance. A third piece is a replica of part of the first. All are from designs which correspond exactly both in character and colouring with those in Lord Dartmouth's possession.¹

The sudden change of Van de Velde's view-point is explained by the researches of Dr. Haverkorn van Rijsewijk. Though he was certainly with the Dutch at the Schooneveld action of June 4, he appears working in London very soon after Rupert returned on the 9th to the Thames to refit. About Midsummer he did a number of sketches on the river, and he accompanied the King when, on July 6, he went down to the Nore to visit the fleet and to give Rupert his final instructions. A large drawing which Van de Velde executed on that occasion, apparently representing the flag-officers assembling for the Council of War, is in the British Museum.

He does not appear to have accompanied the fleet to sea or to have been present at the battle of the Texel. Yet by the end of the year he had so far ingratiated himself with the King as to receive, in concert with his more famous son, a regular commission. On January 12, 1674, Charles the Second signified 'his pleasure that his Highness Prince Rupert and others the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty do forthwith give order for paying the sum of 100*l*. per annum during his Majesty's pleasure unto William van de Velde the elder for taking and making draughts of sea fights; and also for paying the like sum of 100*l*. per annum during his Majesty's pleasure unto William van de Velde the younger for putting the said draughts of sea fights into colours.'²

But here again is the difficulty that no expert hesitates to pronounce that the Texel designs cannot be by the hand of Van de Velde. It is true they approach nearer in character and merit to his bird's-eye view of the Palermo action than do the Sole Bay drawings, but certain technical details, and particularly the amateurish management of the light and shade, condemn them without possibility of appeal. The heavy emphasis of the spars and the purely decorative nature of the colouring point to their having been prepared for tapestry work; but the general arrangement and the way in which the perspective is managed, no less than the skill and precision with which the movement of the battle is represented, make it quite possible they were prepared from drawings such as that which Van de Velde made of the Palermo action.

¹ They were probably the same that Walpole mentions in his *Anecdotes of Painting* as having once been in 'Buckingham House,' now Buckingham Palace. The explanations of them in the 'Authorised Catalogue' at Hampton Court are wrong in every particular.

² *S. P. Dom., Car. II.* 359, f. 18.

8 DARTMOUTH AND VAN DE VELDE

A great effort was being made at this time to restore the fallen glories of the Mortlake tapestry works. They had ruined their director, Sir Sackville Crow, and in 1667 had been taken over by a patriotic syndicate with the Earl of Craven at its head. Poyntz, who styled himself 'the King's tapestry maker,' was appointed art director about 1670, though Crow, writing in that year from the Fleet Prison, says, 'he hath not one good piece of painting or design by him, besides a dear (expensive) prating fellow that knows not what good work is.' Perhaps Crow was right, for the works continued to languish under the new direction. The output was very small, and, so far as is known, these designs were never executed. Indeed, it will be observed they are all more or less unfinished.¹

With regard to the 'Texel' designs, there are indications that the drawings for them were possibly executed by Van de Velde at the order of the first Lord Dartmouth. In the first place, it will be observed that the only private ship marked upon them is the Royal Katherine, which he commanded. Then, amongst the Dartmouth Papers is a sheet of foolscap paper on which three rough sketches of the battle have been drawn, as though to illustrate a verbal explanation that someone was giving. The handwriting bears the closest resemblance to that in which the notes on the face of the drawings are written. The three diagrams, which are here reproduced, are marked '3rd part,' '4th part,' '5th part,' and they correspond roughly with the same 'parts' of the drawings, so far as they go. A point of peculiar interest about them, however, is that they do not extend to the whole field of action, but only to the action of the blue squadron, and that only during the stages of the battle when the red squadron was far away from it and the artist, who presumably followed the commander-in-chief with the red squadron, could not have seen for himself what was happening.

Finally, there is in the Dartmouth MSS. documentary evidence that Lord Dartmouth did commission the elder Van de Velde to execute drawings such as these—in separate pieces and of a panoramic character; at least the artist charged for them by the linear foot. It is a letter written on October 8, 1688, by William Van de Velde de Oude, (the Elder) to Lord Dartmouth, and runs as follows: 'This serves only to give your Lordship notice that according [to] my Lord's order I brought last Friday at my Lord's house the five pieces of pictures, as are known to my lord, and this day being Monday I have put them in their golden frames, which are extraordinary curious and precious. . . . Concerning

¹ For the above details see W. G. Thompson, *A History of Tapestry*, 1906, and the authorities he cites; cf. also Müntz, *Histoire générale de la Tapisserie*, ii. 24, and *Duke of Rutland MSS.* II. 18.

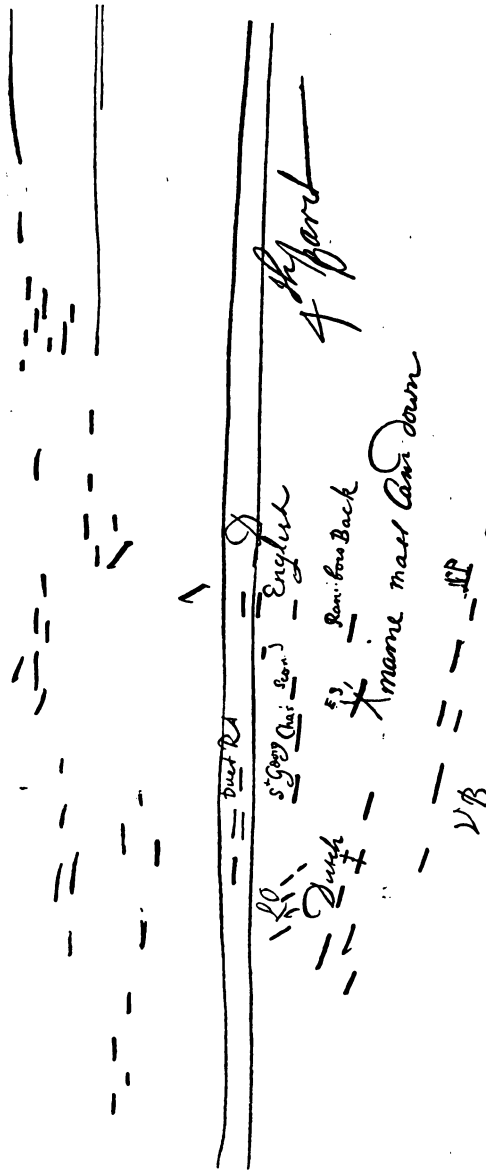


DIAGRAM TO ILLUSTRATE PART OF THE TEXEL ACTION, FROM A ROUGH PENCIL NOTE IN THE DARTMOUTH MSS.

3d part.—All above the upper transverse line. The lower line was drawn in error, and should be regarded as not there. This part indicates very roughly how the gap opened between the blue and red squadrons, and how the Dutch centre and part of its van concentrated on Rupert. It appears to represent a stage of the action a little later than Part 3 of the drawings—probably between 8 and 10, when the fog came on. The ship that has fallen out of the line must be the Cambridge (Captain Herbert), see *post*, p. 39.

4th part.—Corresponding nearly to the 4th part of the drawings, but a little earlier. It shows the Spragge-Tromp action only, which an artist following Rupert could not have seen. *Dutch R A*, 'Dutch Rear Admiral'—that is, Sweers with Tromp's rear division, whom Ossory has temporarily dominated. *D*, part of Tromp's van division. *L O*, Lord Ossory with the Blue rear division, leaving Sweers in order to force Tromp to leeward of the disabled Royal Prince. Tromp's division is just below: his flagship marked with a cross. *St George, Chas, Lion*, the St. George, Royal Charles, and Lion of Spragge's division covering him to windward. *English*, the van of his division. *E S*, Sir Edward Spragge in the Royal Prince disabled at the moment when her 'main mast came down.' *V B*, the blue van division thrown completely to leeward by the shift of wind. Kemphorne's flag is shown flying at the fore. *Rainbow Back*, no explanation of this has been found. It probably means the Rainbow forcing astern to assist the Prince.

my art of drawing the pictures, my lord Berkley paid me for a piece four foot and a half twenty pound, and my lady Berkley, my lord Berkley's mother, paid me for a piece five foot long the sum of twenty-three pound. . . . My lord's pictures are really more excellent as they whereof I mention in this present, I having in those pictures bestowed my utmost endeavours and my art.'¹

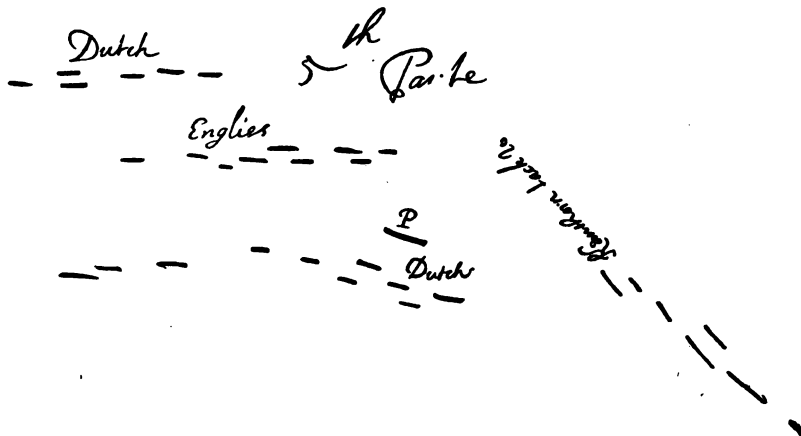


DIAGRAM TO ILLUSTRATE PART OF THE TEXEL ACTION, FROM A ROUGH PENCIL NOTE IN THE DARTMOUTH MSS.

5th parte.—It appears to represent the rear action between 12 and 1, that is just before Part 5 of the drawings. Beginning from the top.—*Dutch*, Tromp's rear division still inactive. *Englies*, Ossory in response to Spragge's message has formed line on his new flagship to attack Tromp from the windward. *P*, the disabled Royal Prince defending herself against Tromp, who has been forced to leeward of her. *Dutch*, Tromp's unsuccessful attack on her. *Kempthorne tacks*, to come to the Prince's rescue, as shown in part 5 of the drawings.

The general conclusion, therefore, on the documentary and intrinsic evidence is that Lord Dartmouth's drawings are designs prepared by a tapestry draughtsman from bird's-eye views specially drawn by William Van de Velde the Elder from his original sketches, after they had been corrected by the Duke of York or other officers who were present at the engagements.

¹ *Dartmouth MSS., Hist. MSS. Com. XI. v. 153.*

II

SOLE BAY

Of all the battles gained at sea
This was the rarest victory
Since Philip's Grand Armado.¹

A song of the Duke's late glorious success over the Dutch.

Preliminary Movements.

THE battle of Sole Bay was claimed as a victory by both sides, and it is only by tracing the conditions under which it was fought that any opinion can be formed as to where the real advantage rested.

The third Dutch war was the outcome of an alliance between England and France against the United Provinces, and under the treaty France was to mobilise thirty ships of war² at Brest to act under the orders of the British commander-in-chief. The first object of the allies was, therefore, to operate the junction, and that of the Dutch to prevent it, or at least to strike a blow at one section or the other before they could unite. The British were concentrating in the Thames, whither the Portsmouth and other ships were moving as they were ready for sea. The Dutch northern divisions were concentrating in the Texel under De Ruyter, the commander-in-chief, and the southern divisions under Banckers, the Zeeland admiral, in the Maas. Two courses were open to them. They might either run through the Channel and blockade Brest, or deal a bold stroke in the Thames, as they had done in 1667. The former alternative was quickly rejected,

¹ *Naval Songs and Ballads* (N.R.S., xxxiii), p. 83.

² At this time there was no clear classification of 'ships of the line.' The English expression is usually 'ships of war and frigates.' If battleships and cruisers are contrasted the usual expression was 'ships of war and light frigates' corresponding to the French 'vaisseaux et frégates légères.' 'Great-ship' is still occasionally found, but 'capital ship' not once in all the documents. In the English service as a rule the first four rates only found a place in the line, that is ships of over forty guns. This was also the rule with the Dutch. The French used quite small frigates to make up their allotted number.

on the ground that after an action off Brest they would have no ports of repair accessible nearer than Spain.

By the end of April neither the Dutch nor the British concentration was complete; but on the 27th the Dutch Government decided in full council of war that De Ruyter with the Holland and northern divisions should get out at once and seek the British fleet in the Thames or elsewhere, picking up the Zeeland or southern squadron, which had not yet joined, on the way. In any case he was to enter the Thames and do what damage he could to the ships that were still there, and then he was to seek the main fleet in the Gunfleet, Sole Bay, the Downs, or wherever else it might be. If, however, contrary to their expectation, the French and British had joined, an action was to be avoided unless De Ruyter considered he saw a good opportunity for engaging with advantage, and then only with the consent of the Civil Plenipotentiary, Cornelis de Witt, the Grand Pensionary's brother, who had been appointed to accompany the fleet. But with De Ruyter and his flag officers rested the decision as to the 'order, form, and manner of execution'—that is to say, the central government kept the general strategy of the campaign in its own hands; and it was understood that if no favourable opportunity offered for attacking the combined fleet De Ruyter was to retire to the Dutch coast and assume a watchful defensive till one occurred. On these orders he sailed with 35 ships on April 30, sending out four cruisers to locate the enemy. But meanwhile the Zeeland Government in a fit of its usual jealous perversity had ordered its admiral Banckers not to put to sea till he heard De Ruyter was out. So instead of proceeding direct for the Thames De Ruyter at the critical moment had to anchor and wait for his colleague.

But for this delay the battle would never have been fought at Sole Bay. The British authorities were still debating the best point for the concentration with the French. Their absorbing preoccupation was how to secure a decision against the Dutch main fleet as soon as possible. Taught by the last two wars, the old hands knew how impossible it was to obtain such a decision by seeking the enemy on his own shoal-protected coast. The only way was to draw him either down Channel or out into the North Sea. It was this dominant insistence on a decisive action that ultimately fixed the point of concentration. The first idea, naturally enough, had been the Downs, but it had been quickly dropped as being too near the Dutch base, and a much more elaborate combination was adopted.

The intention of the Dutch was quickly reported in London, and the Duke of York, who had hoisted his flag at the Nore, summoned a council of war, at which it was decided

at all hazards to get to sea at once and send a summons to the French to meet them at Portsmouth. Seven or eight vessels were not yet ready, and everywhere men and stores were incomplete, but the Duke would not be gainsaid. D'Estrées, the French admiral, told his Government that all the Duke's flag officers were against the premature movement. 'But,' he wrote, 'as he (the Duke) considered that without extreme diligence he ran the risk of being shut in the Thames, while the Dutch, masters of the sea, would reap all the honour and advantage of the position . . . he thought he would leave something to fortune.' For four trying days the wind held easterly, fair for the Dutch to come, and no move could be made. On May 2 the King met the Cabinet in anxious council. The report of the proceedings runs thus: 'His Majesty, on consideration of the best station for the fleet to keep in till the French fleet shall join, directed that it being not advisable to fight with the Dutch before the conjunction . . . except on some great and manifest advantage, it be offered to the Duke, to be debated and resolved by the flag officers, whether Dungeness be not the properest place for the fleet's station . . . and particularly whether it be not better than the Downs, &c. But all is left to the Duke to be resolved with the flag officers.' Thus although the British Government indicated the general strategy it approved it left its officers a rather freer hand than did the Dutch. As the Cabal cabinet came to this decision the British fleet was already streaming out of the river, '40 stout men of war' Spragge says in his *Journal*. The resolution was sent after the Duke, accompanied by a letter from the King, in which, as will afterwards appear, he laid down a whole plan of campaign that can only enhance his contemporary reputation as an authority on naval warfare, and it was this plan that was followed.

As for D'Estrées, he had put to sea within a few hours of the Duke's summons, and was then reaching close in along the Breton coast, to be out of harm's way till he made Guernsey and could get a clean run across to St. Helens.

There had not been much time to lose. The very day the Duke sailed, Banckers joined De Ruyter, and on May 4 they appeared together off the Thames with over forty sail. There they heard from their cruisers that the delay the Zealanders had caused had let their bird escape. The news was confirmed by a belated British frigate that mistook the Dutch fleet for its own and was captured. De Ruyter knew the Duke was no stronger than himself and the rendezvous which the captured cruiser had been given was the Downs. Thither then, without a moment's hesitation, he followed under a press of sail. To his bitter disappointment the road was empty, and the Dutch scouts reported

14 CHARLES EXPLAINS HIS PLAN

the Duke had gone to Portsmouth. Then the British device came within an ace of telling. Desperate to think that by the perverse caution of the Zeelanders they had just missed their chance so narrowly, the Dutch resolved still to pursue and attack even at Spithead. They were already under sail when two hours after the resolution was taken came news that the junction with the French had been made, and the Dutch move was stopped.

D'Estrées had reached St. Helens on the 4th with his thirty ships, five light frigates, and eight fire-ships. The King had come down to greet him, followed by the whole Cabal, and next day went on board to inspect the fleet. As usual he astonished everybody with his intimate technical knowledge, and then proceeded to explain his plan of campaign to the French admiral. Having dwelt on the formidable character of the admiral and the enemy they had to deal with, and warned the French against their predilection for boarding, which he said was neither easy nor profitable at the commencement of an action, he insisted on the importance of annihilating the enemy and not merely taking a few ships. To this end it had been decided to draw them into the open away from their coasts. If they refused to come into the Channel the combined fleet was to proceed into the North Sea, and, having victualled for at least two months, was to anchor on the Dogger Bank to await the arrival of the Dutch East India convoy. Thus the Dutch would be forced to come out and protect it or suffer the serious loss of its capture. With luck the King hoped for both the capture and a naval decision; but in any case to seek the enemy on his own coast was to ensure an indecisive action. The same evening the Duke of York made his appearance, and the junction was effected next day. D'Estrées, with his vice- and rear-admirals, Du Quesne and Rabesnières, at once went aboard the commander-in-chief, and a council was held. The Duke had information that the Dutch were off Dover, still hoping to prevent the junction, and he read to D'Estrées the letter which the King had sent after him. It was to the effect that, if possible, the Dutch were to be enticed into the Channel; otherwise the allies were to take the Dogger Bank position, as the King had already explained. It was unanimously resolved to sail immediately, and if possible strike De Ruyter before he could get back into the North Sea. Next day the fleet sailed with a foul wind, and with exasperating slowness tided it up Channel to get at its prey.¹

¹ For the British strategy see Resolution of Council, May 2, *Dom. Cal. Car. II.* xii. 438. Thorold to Arlington, *ibid.* 468. Williamson to same, *ibid.* 470. Wren to Williamson, *ibid.* 594-5. Same to Navy Commissioners, *ibid.* xiii. p. 8. 'Mémoire du Comte d'Estrées,' Sue, ii. 355. Colbert de

DUTCH ATTEMPT IN THE THAMES 15

Meanwhile the Dutch were in difficulties how to make the best of the situation. It was not till the 7th that the weather permitted a council of war to be held. It was quickly decided that on no account must they now fight off the Isle of Wight or even anywhere in the Channel. The only thing to do, in view of their general instructions, was to take up a position off the Maas and rally their belated vessels, and particularly fire-ships. Accordingly they proceeded to beat out of the Channel against the same wind that was holding the Duke back, but were forced to anchor off Calais on the 9th—that is, the day after the Duke had left Portsmouth. In the meantime a number of fire-ships and other vessels had joined De Ruyter and on the morrow he received further reinforcements. Cornelis de Witt, his civil colleague, also received a letter from the Grand Pensionary strongly urging that while the allies were still to the westward the whole fleet should be carried into the Thames and endeavour to repeat the exploit of 1667. The reinforcements had materially bettered the position, and the council of war seriously debated the proposal, but eventually decided it was far too dangerous. They could get in easily enough, but a westerly wind would be necessary to get them out, and that wind would bring up the allied fleet and probably entrap them. 'If,' wrote Cornelis de Witt to his brother, 'we were absolute masters of the sea it would not be an unprofitable undertaking, but to go into the river and leave so powerful an enemy so near outside I think the height of rashness.' Still the project was too tempting to be left alone altogether, and it was finally decided to organise a light squadron with some fire-ships under Van Ghent, the third in command, with Cornelis Evertsen and Jan van Nes, to go in and see what they could do, while the bulk of the fleet covered them off the Gunfleet,¹ with a squadron of observation cruising between Dunkirk and the North Foreland. As these dispositions were being made it happened that a squadron of belated British ships, under Captain Coleman, in the Gloucester, were feeling their way out to join the Duke. For some time fogs prevented any movement, but at last it cleared and Van Ghent seeing Coleman at once gave chase. Right into the river he followed him till the new Sheerness batteries warned him to stop and De Ruyter signalled his recall. This was on the 14th, and the Duke, after a week's laborious work against baffling

Croissy to Colbert, *ibid.* 356, 361. Ross to Coventry, *Hist. MSS. Com.* IV. i. 229a.

¹ The Dutch called it 'Koningsdiep.' In Blaeu's *Seespiegel*, 1649, the entrance to the King's channel—that is the open water between the Gunfleet Buoy and the Sunk is marked 'Coninx diep.' Rupert called the place 'the Sledway' (see *post*, p. 31). It is now 'the Sled.'

winds, had only just been sighted from the keep of Dover Castle, still to the west of Dungeness.

For two days longer De Ruyter held his position, completely paralysing the flow of trade to London, and particularly the coal traffic with Newcastle. He was, moreover, continually receiving reinforcements from his home ports. There had been some difference of opinion as to whether the position was the best in which to await the allies. The majority were at first in favour of the open sea abreast of Dunkirk, where the observation squadron was cruising, but De Ruyter had had his way. The Gunfleet position due south of Orfordness was chosen as the best to secure them the weather gage, and also for the moral effect of awaiting the enemy on his own coast; but the latter reason, we are told, he kept to himself. So there he stayed till midnight on the 17th, when the observation squadron reported the approach of the combined fleet. Then he stood out to sea. The Duke made a dash at him, but by the time he had got into the orthodox position for engaging van to van darkness fell and no action could take place. All night he kept touch, but on the morrow the weather was so thick and stormy that an engagement was impossible; on the 21st it was fine again, but the wind was westerly, and De Ruyter being to leeward held away for his assigned defensive position in the Schooneveld, that is the road amongst the sandbanks off Walcheren. Thereupon the British council of war decided to make for Sole Bay, in accordance with the King's plan of campaign. It was Sandwich, it is said, who insisted on making no further effort to fight near the banks. 'Now,' wrote one of his officers, 'we may reasonably hope for some greater success than the vain reputation of beating them home.' Sole Bay was reached on the same evening, and the following day they began watering and getting in the stores and men that were being concentrated there, secure that the westerly winds would prevent any sudden attack.

It was several days before De Ruyter's cruisers succeeded in locating the allied fleet, but by May 27 they were able to report their position. The wind had just gone into the north-east, and De Ruyter and De Witt decided that here was the opportunity for which they had been waiting. De Ruyter had but sixty-one ships and the allies had about seventy-one, but no such chance was likely to recur and he did not hesitate.¹ The attack he intended was somewhat new. From each of the nine divisions of

¹ These are De Jonge's figures, taken from various sources, all of which differ. He gives the Dutch ships of the line (that is, 44's to 82's) as 61, frigates (20-36), 14; yachts, 22; fire-ships, 36. Brandt (*Vie de De Ruyter*, p. 476) puts the Dutch higher—ships of war and frigates, 91; yachts, 23; fire-ships, 44 or 54. Some English authorities put the allied fleet as high as '89 fighting ships, none under 40 guns,' but see below, p. 20.

the fleet he had drawn two ships of war and two fire-ships, and formed them into a kind of 'forlorn' of eighteen fighting ships and as many fire-ships. The ships were to proceed in sections each in front of its respective division, and launch the fire-ships against the enemy under cover of the smoke of their guns, as was the usual practice, and endeavour to throw the enemy's line into confusion. De Ruyter's section of the advance force was entrusted to Captain Jan van Brakel, who had been in command of the observation squadron, and was destined in the coming engagement to eclipse the reputation for reckless daring that he had earned at Chatham in 1667. Van Bryn, who had broken the chain on that occasion, was in command of one of the fire-ships. With this organisation De Ruyter sailed on the 27th, steering north-west to reach a position from which he could run down before the wind to make his attack.

THE TWO FLEETS.

No list of the Dutch fleet is accessible, but its squadronal and divisional organisation and staff were as follows :—

DUTCH.

VAN (OR ZEELAND) SQUADRON.

1. Adriaen van Trappen (called Banckers), Lieut.-Admiral of Zeeland, Vice-Admiral of the Fleet (usually written by foreigners Bankart or Bankaert).
2. Cornelis Evertsen, Vice-Admiral of Zeeland.
3. Vice-Admiral Star.

And two rear-admirals.

CENTRE SQUADRON

1. Michel de Ruyter, Lieut.-Admiral of Holland and West Vriesland, Admiral of the Fleet.
2. Lieut.-Admiral Aert van Nes.
3. Vice-Admiral Jan de Lieffde and Rear-Admiral Vlugh.

REAR SQUADRON.

1. Willem van Ghent, Lieut.-Admiral of Holland.
2. Vice-Admiral Isaac Sweers.
3. Rear-Admiral Jan de Haen.

18 THE FRENCH SQUADRON

Of the combined fleet the latest extant official list was as follows :—

ANGLO-FRENCH.

WHITE OR VAN SQUADRON.

Van Division—Abraham du Quesne, Lieut.-General.

1. Illustre	70	Marq. de Grancy.
2. Téméraire	50	M. de Larson.
3. Admirable	68	M. de Beaulieu.
4. Terrible	70	M. du Quesne, Vice-Admiral.
5. Conquérant	70	M. de Thivas.
6. Prince	50	Marq. d'Amfreville.
7. Bourbon	50	M. de Kervin.
8. Hasardeux	38	M. de la Vigerie.
9. Alcyon	46	M. Bitaut de Bléor.
10. Vaillant	50	Chev. de Nesmond.

Centre Division—Comte d'Estrées.

11. Foudroyant	70	M. Louis Gabaret.
12. Brave	54	Chev. de Valbelle.
13. Aquilon	50	Chev. d'Hally.
14. Tonnant	58	M. Desardans.
15. Saint-Philippe	78	Comte d'Estrées, Admiral. M. de Cou, Capit. de Pavillon.
16. Grand	70	M. Gombaud.
17. Duc	50	Chev. de Sepville.
18. Eole	38	Chev. de Cogolin.
19. Oriflamme	50	M. de Kerjean.
20. Excellent	50	M. de Magnon.
21. Arrogant	38	M. de Villeneuve-Ferrière.

Rear Division—M. des Rabesnières (chef d'escadre).

22. Fort	60	Comte de Blénac.
23. Rubis	46	M. de St. Aubin d'Infreville.
24. Galant	46	Chev. de Flacourt.
25. Sanspareil	66	M. de la Clocheterie.
26. Superbe	70	M. des Rabesnières, Rear-Admiral.
27. Le Sage	50	M. de Tourville.
28. Hardi	38	M. de la Roque-Garseval.
29. Heureux	50	M. Pannetier.
30. Invincible	70	Commandeur de Verdille.

5 light frigates, 8 fire-ships.

NOTE.—D'Estrées had a Vice-Admiral's flag; Duquesne, a Rear-Admiral's; and Rabesnières, a *cornette* or broad pennant. By a royal ordonnance of 1670 the white flag at the main was confined to the Admiral of France when he was at sea in person, or to his second in command during the Admiral's temporary absence, and when he was killed. By the same ordonnance a *chef d'escadre* flew his *cornette* at the mizen in a fleet and at the main when commanding a squadron of five sail or more.—Daniel, *Milice Française*, ii. 733.

RED OR CENTRE SQUADRON.

Van Division—Sir Edward Spragge.

1. Resolution	66	John Berry.
2. Bristol	48	Chas. Wylde.
3. London	100	Sir Edward Spragge, Vice-Admiral.
4. Old James	68	John Heyward.
5. Sweepstakes	36	Geo. Cannyng.
6. Dunkirk	58	Francis Courtnay.
7. Diamond	48	Thos. Foulis.
8. Monk	58	Bernard Ludman.

Centre Division—Duke of York.

9. Yarmouth	52	Robert Werden.
10. Cambridge	66	Sir Fretchville Hollis.
11. Fairfax	66	Geo. Legge.
12. Victory	80	Lord Ossory.
13. Royal Prince	100	The Duke of York, Admiral. Sir John Cox, 1st Captain. Sir J. Narbrough, 2nd Captain.
14. St. Michael	90	Sir Robt. Holmes.
15. Monmouth	66	Rich. Beech.
16. Adventure	40	John Tyrwhitt.

Rear Division—Sir John Harman.

17. York	58	Thos. Eliot.
18. Greenwich	60	Levi Greene.
19. Anne	58	John Waterworth.
20. Royal Charles	96	Sir John Harman, Rear-Admiral.
21. Rainbow	56	James Story.
22. Forester	28	Henry Killigrew.
23. Dover	48	John Ernle.
24. Revenge	58	John Hart.

BLUE OR REAR SQUADRON.

Van Division—Sir John Kempthorne.

25. Gloucester	58	Will. Coleman.
26. Bonaventure	46	Rich. Trevanion.
27. St. George	64	Jeffrey Pearce.
28. St. Andrew	90	Sir John Kempthorne, Vice-Admiral.
29. Warspite	66	Robt. Robinson.
30. Antelope	46	Rich. White.
31. French Ruby	66	Thos. R. Coyle.

Centre Division—Lord Sandwich.

32. Montague	60	Thos. Darcy.
33. Falcon	40	Chas. Mountague.
34. Leopard	54	Peter Bowen.
35. Rupert	66	Sir John Holmes.
36. Royal James	100	Earl of Sandwich, Admiral. Rich. Haddock, Captain.
37. Henry	74	Francis Digby.
38. Edgar	70	John Wetwang.
39. Crown	46	William Finch.

Rear Division—Sir Joseph Jordan.

40. Mary	60	John Brookes.
41. Ruby	48	Stephen Pyend.
42. Triumph	74	Will. Hannam.
43. Sovereign	100	Sir Jos. Jordan, Rear-Admiral.
44. Unicorn	56	Rich. James.
45. Tiger	40	John Turner.
46. Plymouth	58	Roger Strickland.

According to this list the combined fleet contained 76 battle units as against De Ruyter's 61. But the total 76 includes 8 ships of 40 guns, or less, which even then were not regarded as ships of the line. The list cannot, however, be taken as the exact 'order of battle,' for it does not contain the Royal Katherine, 76, Sir John Chicheley, nor the Princess and Dover, which joined at Sole Bay on May 21. From the drawing the Katherine appears to have become Spragge's second astern in the van division of the red squadron. The Mary Rose, 46 or 48, Capt. William Davies, which joined late from Portsmouth, is also absent. She was in the blue squadron. The list does, however, include Coleman's squadron, which joined on

May 18 or 19, and it may therefore be taken as approximately accurate. Adding the 4 late arrivals to the list we get 80. Deducting ships of 40 guns or less, *i.e.* 8 in the list and one of the arrivals, we get De Jonge's total 71.

De Ruyter's Attack.

According to the Hampton Court tapestry the Duke anchored his fleet in three lines of divisions abreast from south to north, close in to the coast, so as to facilitate their work. The French, who in return for submitting to the British commander-in-chief had been constituted the white or van squadron, lay to the south. The Duke had the red squadron in the centre, and to the north lay Sandwich with the rear or blue squadron. It is said that on the morning of the 27th, when the wind came easterly, fair for the Dutch to attack, the Duke summoned his first captain, Sir John Cox, with the intention of weighing and forming order of battle outside the bay. Cox, however, made light of his anxiety, pointed out that according to their last intelligence De Ruyter was at Goree in no condition to sail, and persuaded the Duke to stay where he was another twenty-four hours to complete his watering and give the ship 'a pair of boot-hose tops.'¹ Sandwich highly disapproved the resolution and carried his opposition so far that the Duke accused him of an excess of prudence, and Sandwich, deeply insulted, left the council table never to return to it.

Still cruisers were thrown well out from each squadron to give timely warning. About 2.30 in the morning, while the flagship was still on the careen, guns were heard to windward, and shortly afterwards the French frigate appeared, quickly followed by the others, making the signal for a fleet somewhere to the North of East.² At sunrise, about 5.0 A.M., the Dutch fleet could be seen on the horizon, and it was not till then, so the Duke says, that, having got off the careen, he made the signal to weigh; nor was it till 5.30 that they were all under sail and with a failing breeze from E by S and ESE began forming line, to the northward; that is, with the line reversed so that the French became the rear squadron instead of the van. It

¹ *I.e.* careen her sufficiently to clean between wind and water.

² They are thus represented in the Hampton Court tapestry. The French cruiser is leading, which confirms the French version that Captain Cogolin of the *Eole* gave the first alarm. The exactness with which the complicated long-distance signal under Art. XXVI. of the Duke of York's Sailing Instructions is reproduced testifies to the technical accuracy of the artist. Narbrough's *Journal of the Royal Prince* (*Admiralty Library*) also says a French frigate gave the first alarm, having been the most southerly of the scouts.

is possible that this arrangement may have had some influence, and not an altogether unpardonable one, on the extraordinary and still unexplained behaviour of the French in the action. The Dutch were coming down in line abreast with the 'forlorns' in front—the Amsterdam squadron under Van Ghent on their right, De Ruyter with the Maas squadron in the centre, and Banckers with the Zeeland squadron on the left. Sandwich's squadron was leading the combined fleet in reverse order NE by N, and being nearest to the enemy he fired the first shot. He had been furthest to windward, but by bearing up had succeeded in forming his line pretty well. Captain Haddock, Sandwich's first captain, says that only the *Edgar*, 70, and *Mary Rose*, 46, were to leeward of his wake, and that about seven o'clock the blue squadron was engaged with Van Ghent's. De Ruyter inclined further to the south to get abreast of the Duke in the *Royal Prince*, and engaged about an hour later towards eight o'clock. Owing to the French having been ordered the previous day further to sea and to the south, Banckers had to keep on still further upon the opposite tack to the English. The only order the French had received was a verbal one to keep close to the wind. It apparently never entered the Duke's head to tell them the rear was to lead, and whether by mistake or intention D'Estrées, instead of following the English to the north, filled away on the same tack as his opponent Banckers. Banckers held after him, and as both Van Ghent and De Ruyter had hauled up to the northward to engage on the same tack with the British, the action was split in two from the commencement.¹

At this time, according to the Duke, out of the forty-six vessels in the red and blue squadrons, only a score were in line, and thus De Ruyter's boldness and skill were so far justified that we were actually inferior at the crisis. It was an inferiority due to De Ruyter's tactics. It was not, as the Duke believed, that the British ships had failed to get into line, but that while Banckers went off after D'Estrées, De Ruyter and Van Ghent concentrated on the British centre. When Van Ghent hauled his wind to engage, he left nearly all Jordan's division—the leading division of the blue squadron—out of action. As soon as Sandwich saw this he sent Jordan a message to tack and weather Van Ghent ahead. This Jordan was already attempting, and the movement is well shown on the left of Plate I.

¹ It is possible the mistake was due to the French ignorance of fleet tactics. Father Daniel says of the battle (*La Milice Française*, ii. 683, Paris 1721), 'The French there learned what they did not know before, how to set a great fleet in battle order. I know this particular from one of the first, most senior and most skilful officers we have in the Navy.'

The First Plate.

The time represented is about 11.0, just before the Duke lost his main top-mast, and had to shift his flag.¹ By that time, it will be seen, Sandwich was in a desperate plight owing to one of the most daring pieces of service recorded in naval history. With even more than his usual recklessness, Van Brakel, regardless of his proper station in De Ruyter's squadron, had thrust his ship, the *Groot Hollandia*, which was only a 62, right under the bowsprit of the Vice-Admiral's 100-gun flagship, and there he lay raking her from stem to stern almost with impunity. This was done half an hour after the action began. In vain Sandwich tried to get free. The flood tide was jamming the Dutchman hard under his bows and nothing could be done without cutting away his own bowsprit.

Between 9 and 10 Van Ghent himself came up and engaged him broadside to broadside, with another Dutch flagship in support. Sandwich was for boarding Van Brakel, but Haddock, his first captain dissuaded him, urging they had barely men enough left to keep the guns going. Then they sent two fire-ships at him. One he fended off and the other he sank, as the plate shows. Some hope of relief was expected from *Jordan*, when he was seen to have doubled, but he says he passed on in the smoke to engage De Ruyter, unable to see the desperate plight of his immediate chief. Meanwhile Sandwich's fire had told. Van Ghent himself was killed, and the attack slackened. By that time too the flood was spent, and as the tide turned Sandwich got an anchor out at the stern. At the same moment he boarded Van Brakel and seized his ship till all the rigging that was foul of his own could be cut away. Then, as the ebb began to carry Van Brakel clear and the two vessels parted, he recalled his boarders and fell to leeward to repair damages.

Two ships astern of him is the *Henry*, 74, which had been his second ahead. In trying to cover him she was terribly cut up and has fallen astern and is just clearing herself of a fire-ship. Her captain, Digby, was killed, and most of her officers. The legend on the drawing states that she was taken. If so she was certainly retaken, for she got back into the Thames next day. The large ship working up into the line may be the *Edgar*, 74, or possibly the *Bonaventure*, 46, of Kempthorne's division, which begins about here. He reported that he had his whole division in line, 'except Trevanion,' who commanded the

¹ Lord O'Brien, who was in the flagship, put it at 10.0. Narbrough, who kept the ship's journal, says the main top-mast went between 11.0 and 12.0. Most authorities say the flag was rehoisted by 11.0.

Bonaventure. Kempthorne himself is seen to the right in the St. Andrew, 90, almost foul of his second, the Warspite, 66.

Coming to the red squadron Sir John Harman, who commanded its rear division in the Charles, 96, is seen disabled, and has just been saved from a fire-ship by Captain John Ernle, of the Dover, 48. Between him and the Duke the confusion in the line is too great to identify ships, but his second astern (now ahead with the line reversed) was the St. Michael, 90, Captain Sir Robert Holmes, to which the Duke is about to transfer his flag. His yacht is standing by in readiness. The Duke is flying the Royal Standard at the main, and the 'bloody flag' at the fore, which was the signal to engage in all services. He is also flying the 'Union' at the mizen peak, which, under the final form of the Duke of York's instructions, was the signal for the order of battle. It is being repeated in accordance with the Duke's supplementary order of 1665, by the flag officers of his own squadron, Harman and Spragge, but not by Sandwich or his flag officers. Haddock says he did hoist it, but probably he took it in when Jordan was told to tack and double on Van Ghent.¹

Two Dutch flags, De Ruyter and the younger Van Nes of the same division, are concentrating their fire on the Duke. Astern of him is his other second, the Victory, 90, Captain Lord Ossory, and then the Fairfax, Captain George Legge, first Lord Dartmouth, both doing their best to relieve the pressure on their chief. But, as Narbrough wrote in his journal, it was then 'calm as a milk-bowl, and none could get up to help us.'

In the van (now rear) division of the red squadron, we see Sir John Chicheley in trouble in the Royal Katherine. She had only just filled up with men and had joined on the 21st with the Princess and Dover. Sir John had recently returned from the Mediterranean, and had only been in command a few days. She does not appear in the official order of battle at all, and from the inscription it would appear there had been no time to clear her for action. As the wind fell she had drifted close to the flagship of the elder Van Nes, commanding De Ruyter's van division. Thus they fought as they lay, till Chicheley was overpowered by superior gunnery, and with his lower ports under water struck his flag. He and his officers were removed as prisoners with about half the crew. After being in possession of the Dutch three hours the remainder of the crew raised an alarm below that she was sinking. Whereupon the prize crew opened the hatches and called up the prisoners to help at the pumps, but, led by a mild-looking Puritan petty officer, 'a hero,'

¹ See *Fighting Instructions* (N.R.S. xxix.), pp. 128 and 153.

says Buckingham, 'in the figure of a saint,' they immediately fell upon the Dutch and recaptured the ship. Further on Sir Edward Spragge, vice-admiral of the red squadron in the London, 100, is repeating the signal for the line of battle. Astern of him, he says, the Old James, Bristol, and Resolution received most damage.

Already clear of Spragge's division, the French are going off to the southward on the opposite tack, and Banckers with the Zeeland squadron is standing with them, having, so Narbrough says, only about a score of vessels to the French thirty. The second French ship from the rear is M. de Rabesnières in La Superbe, 70, the 'cornette' or rear flagship of D'Estrées's squadron, engaged at long range with Vice-Admiral Star. His 'cornette' or swallow-tailed flag is clearly seen at the mizen. His second astern should be Tourville, in Le Sage, 50. Further on D'Estrées's flag is seen with that of Banckers abreast of it. Du Quesne, with the French van, is out of sight. It will be observed that the upper works of the French ships, like those of the Dutch, are painted blue, while in the British fleet the colour is red.

The Second Plate—'about noon.'

On the left, Sandwich's ship, the Royal James, is in flames. After she had sunk or put off three fire-ships and got clear of Van Brakel, both flagships that were engaging her fired simultaneous broadsides, and, under cover of the smoke, Van Rhyn got his fire-ship home. The James was a mass of flames almost immediately, and Sandwich was never seen again alive, though his burnt body was recovered, only recognisable by his clothes and the insignia of the Garter.¹ Near the burning ship is the Dartmouth frigate, which the Duke, in passing, had ordered to stand by to rescue her crew.

The whole of the blue squadron has tacked, and got the wind of the body of the Dutch fleet.² Kempthorne says, about 11.0, he saw Jordan had got to windward of the squadron, with which he himself was engaged; he therefore tacked too,

¹ Lediard has a story that when the ship took fire he retired to his cabin. Haddock followed, and finding him with his handkerchief over his face told him of his danger. But he answered 'he saw how things went (reflecting on the words the Duke had let fall the day before) and was therefore resolved to perish with his ship.' The *Columna Rostrata* says he fought the fire to the last and then 'leaped through the flames into the sea and ended his life to his immortal honour.' Lediard's story is doubtful: Haddock was in the surgeon's hands at the time, and in his narrative he says nothing about it. *Dartmouth MSS. (Hist. MSS. Com.)*, vol. iii. p. 14.

² It was this movement that cut off Van de Velde's yacht and interfered, as he says, with his sketching.

as can be seen in the drawing, forcing the enemy also to stand to the southward. About the same hour De Ruyter's concentration on the Royal Prince had so cut up her masts that she was unmanageable, and the Duke was persuaded to shift his flag to the St. Michael, leaving Narbrough in charge of the Prince, for Cox had been killed early in the action. Almost immediately he had to tack to avoid the bank off Lowestoft, and in so doing, he says, he cut through Van Ghent's squadron, weathering the rear of it, and the whole of De Ruyter's, though many of his own division failed to do so, and tacked to leeward of the Dutch centre. All the Dutch vessels that had not already been forced to tack by the blue squadron now did so, and stood on the same board with the Duke to parry his movement in what afterwards became the orthodox manner. The Duke was thus caught between two fires, and the two fleets were completely intermingled, as shown in the drawing. To the left or windward, and lost in the smoke, was the blue squadron; then came part of Van Ghent's; then the Duke's and the ships that had followed him; then the rest of Van Ghent's and all De Ruyter's, and then the rest of the Duke's squadron, all standing to the southward. In the foreground the disabled Royal Prince is drifting to leeward, busy repairing damages, while to the right is the Royal Katherine, just recaptured, and flying the British ensign again. On the extreme right are the Zeeland and French squadrons, almost out of sight.

In this way the fight continued the whole afternoon. In an hour or two an easterly breeze sprang up, and Spragge with some of his division managed about five o'clock to get into station ahead of the Duke. He had been immediately followed by his faithful second the Victory (Lord Ossory). But she was soon beaten out of the line, and her place was taken by Legge in the Fairfax, her next astern. The St. Michael suffered severely from a fresh concentration against her, but she handled Van Ghent's second, the Staveren, so roughly that she shortly afterwards struck to the Greenwich. This incident is shown in the Third Plate. So hot was the engagement at this point that by five o'clock Holmes reported that the St. Michael could no longer keep her station, and the Duke once more shifted his flag, this time to Spragge's ship, the London, which had just got into station ahead of him.

The Third Plate—'about 6.0 at night.'

The Duke has already shifted his flag to the London, and is leading the fleet. Spragge's van ships, the Resolution, Bristol, and Old James, having, as he says, suffered too severely to keep station, had fallen astern. As the easterly breeze had

freshened, and cleared the air, both sides had been able to remedy the confusion which the calm succeeding the first movements had caused. By a series of movements, not represented in these drawings, both De Ruyter and the Duke have got their fleets together again, and both are standing, in some semblance of order, to the south to regain touch respectively with Banckers and D'Estrées. The only incident represented is that of which Captain James Story was the hero. De Ruyter, who not long before had nearly been burnt by a fire-ship from the blue squadron, which had weathered him, had just signalled to all ships to windward of him to bear up into his wake, so as to lead the movement to rejoin Banckers, when he saw Story in his way. In all the majesty of the Zeven Provinciën and her 100 guns he bore down upon him. Story's ship, the Rainbow, was only a little old-fashioned three-decker of 56 guns, but she would not give way, and De Ruyter passed on without forcing her from his path. The action, indeed, was now practically at an end, having lasted about twelve hours, and at nightfall the firing entirely ceased. De Ruyter declared that he had been in many battles, but he had never seen one so terrible, or one that had lasted so long.

The following morning the French rejoined, almost uninjured, though Rabesnières had been killed, and some show was made of renewing the action. But eventually both sides retired to port to refit. Whether or not D'Estrées had secret orders from Louis XIV. not to let the Dutch be crushed, nor to imperil his own squadron, cannot be discussed here. Suffice it to say that it was generally believed at the time, in all three services, that he must have had some such orders, and the best French opinion still finds his behaviour difficult to explain on any other theory.

As to the result of the action the Duke had succeeded in drawing De Ruyter out into the North Sea, but not in the way that was intended, and he had failed to secure a decision against him. Owing to the loss of the Royal James the material advantage lay with the Dutch. Otherwise the losses appear to have been equally severe. The Dutch confess to having spent eleven fire-ships with no result. The Staveren, 48, and another of the smaller ships were brought in prizes; the Joshua, 52, was sunk; and a fourth vessel subsequently blew up. No British prize was taken into a Dutch port, and though several captains were killed no ship except the Royal James was lost, although on both sides there were plenty of excitable people like Mr. Price, chaplain of the St. Andrew, who could swear to seeing several large enemy's ships sunk.

Tactically De Ruyter's well-planned fire-ship attack had failed to give the results that were hoped for, and so far the Duke could claim a victory. But strategically the advantage was

wholly with the Dutch. Not only had the allies failed to get a decision, but they had been so severely mauled that during the remainder of the campaign it was found impossible to dominate the Dutch or to secure such a command of the North Sea as either to cut off the flow of their trade or even threaten to pass troops over in support of Turenne's invasion. Spragge with a small squadron was able to cut up their fishing fleet, but that was all. In short De Ruyter, by his bold, defensive action, had been able to keep the command in dispute. While the inundation stopped the French advance in front, the Dutch rear was rendered unassailable from the sea. It was enough to put a new heart into the dispirited Dutch and enable them to restore the almost desperate situation.

III.

THE TEXEL, AUGUST 11, 1673. PLATES IV. TO X.

Preliminary Movements.

AT the end of the campaign of 1672, after all further attempts to force a decisive action had been baffled by De Ruyter's skilful defensive attitude, the French had retired to their own ports to refit. D'Estrées was continued in the command, in spite or probably on account of his curious behaviour. But Du Quesne had expressed his opinion of his chief with so much freedom that it was clear he could no longer be trusted not to do his duty, and he was superseded by Martel, and Desardans became rear-admiral in Rabesnières' place. At home the Duke of York was superseded by Prince Rupert. Though he retained his offices of Lord High Admiral and Warden of the Cinque Ports, with the whole control of the Navy, he had to appoint Rupert his Lieutenant and Vice-Admiral of England. Spragge became vice-admiral of the fleet in place of Lord Sandwich. On the Dutch side a reconciliation was effected between De Ruyter and the younger Tromp, who became vice-admiral, so that Van Ghent was well replaced. The greatest change, however, was in the supreme direction. A few weeks after the battle of Sole Bay, when Turenne's invasion was in full flood, the two De Witts had been massacred in a popular outbreak, and William of Orange, though then only twenty-three, was elected Captain-General and Admiral of the United Provinces, which gave him the direction of the war. So he began his long duel with Louis XIV., and served his apprenticeship in combined strategy, in which he afterwards showed himself so much a master as King of England.

As before, the general attitude was to be active defence, and again a blow was to be attempted at the Thames before the British mobilisation was complete, so as to prevent the concentration with the French. This time, however, it was to take the form of blocking the river by sinking ships in the fairway. Eight of them were prepared—'sinkers' Rupert called them—and at the end of April De Ruyter put to sea with them and the northern squadron. Again the Zeelanders were not ready ;

30 *ATTEMPT TO BLOCK THE THAMES*

but this time he would not wait, and stood across at once. The place chosen for the 'sinkers' was at the Middle Ground—five in the north King's Channel and three in the south. A squadron of cruisers and fire-ships was told off under Rear-Admirals Jan van Nes and Vlugh to get the thing done, while De Ruyter covered them in his old station off the Gunfleet. On May 2 they were off the Thames, but it grew so thick that nothing could be done. Next day, which was almost as bad, they began groping for the scene of action. On the 4th the fog cleared, and then, to their disgust, they saw Rupert lying off the Middle Ground waiting for them. This and intelligence of the other movements of the allies convinced De Ruyter the plan was discovered, and he called off Van Nes and his 'sinkers,' and abandoned the attempt.

A glance at what was going on in England will show that in all probability the scheme had been discovered. At Whitehall there had been a considerable difference of opinion as to the best plan of campaign to adopt. Rupert, with characteristic impetuosity, was for seeking out De Ruyter and attacking him wherever he found him, regardless of all unfavourable conditions, or even to land if De Ruyter could not otherwise be forced to action. The King, however, throughout seems to have set his face against any attempt to land before a decision had been obtained at sea. The plan of campaign he favoured and eventually insisted on was founded on the preparation of an expeditionary corps of 15,000 men, which was to be used to force De Ruyter to sea. The concentration with the French was to be arranged much in the same way as before. The bulk of the British fleet was in the Thames, but a strong division had been fitting at Portsmouth, including the newly launched *Royal Charles*, of 100 guns, which was to carry Rupert's flag. On this division the French were to concentrate, and thither also Rupert intended to proceed, as though they still hoped to tempt the Dutch down Channel. By the end of April the Thames division, though still short of men and stores, was sufficiently advanced to assemble at the Nore. Rupert had so far had his way that his instructions were to go to Portsmouth, and having joined with the French, and embarked 5,000 troops destined for the fleet, to proceed at once to the Dutch coast and attack the States' ships in harbour, with liberty to land if necessary. If he thought fit to hold any place, he would be supported from home. These orders were dated April 26, the day before De Ruyter received his. On the 28th the fleet was assembling at the Nore, and next day De Ruyter put to sea. Though four of Rupert's best ships were not ready—the *Sovereign*, *Victory*, *Warspite*, and *Cambridge*—he determined to move at once to the Middle Ground, and thence to the Downs, in a fever lest the Dutch should be out first. It was not till May 2 that

the wind permitted him to get to the Middle Ground, but it was just in time, and on the 4th he wrote to the King: 'The Holland ships which came to make use of their sinkers are returned to the gross of their fleet in the Sledway.'

Seeing De Ruyter's exposed position Rupert called a council of war, which resolved to ask the King to order the Portsmouth division, with or without the French, to come on to the Downs, 'conceiving,' as Rupert says, 'that if they come thither I shall with our fleet here drive the enemy into a great strait and securely join the French fleet.' But De Ruyter, having heard the French were in the Channel, was equally alive to the danger, and forthwith went away to his chosen station in the Schooneveld to join hands with the Zeelanders and his other belated details. Thence he sent out a light squadron, pending the arrival of the Zeelanders, to see, as before, what they could do in the Thames and to make a reconnaissance in force. The information they brought back was of the expeditionary force that was preparing—exaggerated to 30,000 men—and it had the desired effect. The Prince of Orange ordered De Ruyter to follow the combined fleet whenever it appeared on the coast.

The allied junction was finally effected off Rye on May 16. Rupert was determined to sail with the first fair wind and to attack De Ruyter where he lay, or if he found him inaccessible to land the 5,000 troops he had on board in Zeeland. The King, however, had come down, as before, to greet the French admiral. He had just given the final orders for the expeditionary force, and, now that he knew the Dutch had been out, he would not hear of any attempt to land till an action had been fought at sea.¹

For the combined order of battle it was this time arranged—in view of what had happened at Sole Bay—that the French squadron should take the centre. Copies of our sailing and fighting instructions were also issued to them for translation, that there might be no excuse about signals; but when the translation was made it was found to be full of 'gross and very material errors,' which had to be corrected. This done, Rupert sailed on the 20th to do his best to bring the Dutch to action.

His idea was to adopt De Ruyter's plan of a light advanced squadron to cover a fire-ship attack, with the mass of the fleet in support. It consisted of thirty men-of-war and eight fire-ships, and with this force—to return De Ruyter's compliment of last year—he delivered an attack amongst the sandbanks on May 28, the anniversary of Sole Bay. His object was to force De Ruyter in and seize his anchorage. But De Ruyter was not to be caught. With his sure eye for an action he immediately weighed

¹ Lord Alington to Lord Arlington, May 19, *Dom. Cal.* xv. p. 269.

and got home a heavy counter-attack before Rupert's formation was complete, and the 'forlorn hope,' as the soldiers called it, could not be supported. No one had been placed in command of it; it was hustled into the red squadron, and the French in the centre had to suffer a concentrated attack. Still, now that D'Estrées could not lead his squadron out of action, his captains did extremely well; but the whole affair had been badly organised, and it was practically a failure. The Dutch did not come off with impunity, but De Ruyter skilfully withdrew at the right moment, and Rupert held his ground to repair and continue the blockade.

With such a position De Ruyter could not rest content, especially in view of the British military expedition that was preparing. Rupert, moreover, had taken up a peculiarly bad position, and in spite of Spragge's protests he would not alter it. In a week the wind came right to bring out all the weakness of Rupert's position, and on June 4 De Ruyter attacked again. His assault was not pressed home, but sufficient damage was done to crews and rigging to force Rupert to run for the Nore to repair damages and fill up with ammunition.

So far, then, the campaign had been as unsatisfactory as ever. Rupert complained that several of his best ships had been unfit for service, and that the fleet had been merely 'huddled' to sea. And just then opinion was setting hard against his rival the Duke of York. Though the Test Act had been passed in March he was still exercising his office in June. In May he had been made generalissimo of the expeditionary force. But on June 13 an Order in Council was issued for ascertaining the duty of Lord High Admiral. On the 14th it was sent to the Duke, and next day he resigned all his offices. The Admiralty was put into commission with a board consisting of all the principal members of the Government with Rupert at the head, but with the understanding, apparently, the King intended to preside in person on all important occasions.

So serious was the lack of stores and men that it was a month before Rupert was ready for sea again. In the meantime he had been made Commander-in-chief in the Duke of York's place. He was also General of the expeditionary force so long as it was at sea, but the command was to devolve on Schomberg so soon as it landed. On July 4 a cruiser reported having located the Dutch at the Wielings, off Sluys. Rupert had a general idea that he was intended to make a demonstration before the place, and if De Ruyter refused 'to come out of his hole' to proceed along the coast northward to the Maas or Texel to draw him with a threat of landing. Fearing an attack he was anxious to get to sea, and on July 6 he announced his intention of sailing in two days. He had received no special directions, and begged, if

there were no other design thought on than the best way to engage the enemy's fleet, he might either have positive orders or a free hand. The expeditionary force, he said, was still quite unfit to embark, much less to make a descent. The same day the King came down in person to the fleet with the Duke of York and most of the Council, and that day and the next held a council of war on the flagship. The decision was that Rupert must wait till the transports were ready for sea. Now it was his turn to protest against any attempt to land before the Dutch fleet had been dealt with. But the King had no such intention. His idea was only to make the threat more acute so as to ensure Rupert the best chance of a real decision before he tried his hand again, and for this purpose he ordered him to escort Schomberg and his force to Yarmouth as the first step in reopening the campaign. By this move the line of passage which the Dutch had to bar with their fleet would lie across the open North Sea.¹ The troops were landed accordingly on July 21, and the following day Rupert stood over for the Schooneveld, where his cruisers had just reported De Ruyter to be lying.

The Two Fleets.

No authentic list of either fleet has come to light. According to a French list given by Eugène Sue, the combined fleet consisted of over eighty men-of-war, including twenty-eight French, which were, on the average, considerably more powerful than the previous year. D'Estrées had a new flagship, *La Reine*, of 100 guns. Rupert, finding his new flagship, the *Royal Charles*, had proved unsatisfactory in the Schooneveld action, had shifted his flag to the *Royal Sovereign*, the *Royal Charles* being stationed as second astern of Spragge's flagship, the *Royal Prince*, in the blue squadron. Sue's list was drawn up before this change was made. It is incomplete, and does not give the order of battle. On this point the main feature was that Louis XIV. had insisted on the French squadron returning to its place in the van, for which he had stipulated, and it had become once more the white squadron.

In the British fleet the vacant junior flag had been given to Lord Ossory. It had been intended for Sir John Narbrough—a real seaman of the best school—but as he was away in the Mediterranean when the fleet was organised he lost it. The spirit which inspired his whole life was shown, however, by his

¹ Rupert to Arlington, July 6 and 11, *Dom. Cal.* xv. Spragge's *Journal*, July 6 and 7. Van de Velde the Elder accompanied the King on the occasion, and made his first drawings for him. That of the council of war assembling is in the British Museum.

consenting to become Lord Ossory's first captain, and hence, no doubt, the brilliant behaviour of his division throughout the action.

The organisation was as follows :—

VAN OR WHITE SQUADRON—D'ESTRÉES.

<i>Van Division</i>	Martel	Royal Thérèse
<i>Centre „</i>	D'Estrées	La Reine
<i>Rear „</i>	Desardans	L'Orgueilleux

RED OR CENTRE SQUADRON—RUPERT.

<i>Van Division</i>	Harman	Charles
<i>Centre „</i>	Rupert	Royal Sovereign
	First Captain—Sir Wm. Reeves. ¹	
	Second „ John Wetwang.	
<i>Rear „</i>	Sir John Chicheley	London

BLUE OR REAR SQUADRON—SIR EDW. SPRAGGE.

<i>Van Division</i>	Kempthorne	St. Andrew
<i>Centre „</i>	Spragge	Royal Prince
	Captain—Thos. Fowler.	
<i>Rear „</i>	Ossory	St. Michael
	First Captain—Sir J. Narbrough.	
	Second „ Thos. Grey.	

The order of battle it is impossible to restore ; but Rupert's seconds were Legge, in the Katherine, and Sir J. Holmes, in the Rupert. Other ships in his own division were Resolution (Sir J. Berry), Henry (Sir J. Ernle), Mary (Sir R. Strickland), Crown (Carter). In Harman's division were the Triumph (Davies) and the Warspite (Stout).

The total of the allied fleet is variously given, but Sue's statement of a little over eighty seems most probable. It is at any rate confirmed by Narbrough, who says the blue division had twenty-seven in line—a figure which, assuming the squadrons were equal as usual, would give the exact total of Sue's list, viz. eighty-one. It almost certainly did not reach eighty-five. As for the Dutch fleet, according to De Jonge, the official list which De Ruyter sent to the Prince of Orange four days before the

¹ Schomberg, after Rupert had fired on his yacht for carrying a colour at the main, wrote to Arlington: 'I am afraid he does not take the advice of the wisest, and that he allows himself to be governed by his former page, Sir W. Reeves.'—*Dom. Cal.* xv. 455.

battle showed a fleet of sixty ships of 40 to 84 guns,¹ 15 frigates and 22 fire-ships. It was thus both by numbers and strength of units very inferior to that of the allies. It was divided into three equal squadrons of the usual three divisions each, and was organised as follows:—

VAN SQUADRON (ZEELAND).

Lieut.-Admiral Banckers.

Van Division—Vice-Admiral Cornelis Evertsen.

Centre Division—Lieut.-Admiral Banckers.

Rear Division—Vice-Admiral Star.

CENTRE SQUADRON (MAAS).

Lieut.-Admiral De Ruyter.

Van Division—Lieut.-Admiral Aert van Nes.

Centre Division—Lieut.-Admiral De Ruyter.

Rear Division—Vice-Admiral Jan de Liefde.

REAR SQUADRON (AMSTERDAM).

Lieut.-Admiral Cornelis Tromp.

Van Division—Vice-Admiral Sweers.

Centre Division—Lieut.-Admiral Tromp.

Thos. Tobias, First Captain.

Rear Division—Rear-Admiral Jan de Haen.

First Part. (Plate IV.)

The fleets are represented as they observed one another on August 11 off the Texel about daybreak. Though inscribed 'about 4 o'clock,' it gives incidents which occurred between that hour and 6 o'clock.

Rupert had found De Ruyter 'in his old hole' at the Schooneveld behind the Sands, and as he had stringent orders from the King not to attack him there, he stood up along the coast on a north-west wind to try to entice his enemy out, according to his instructions. Sure enough De Ruyter weighed, and followed him till Rupert thought he had him, and signalled to tack. But just then the wind veered to south-west, and gave the Dutch the weather-gage. Thereupon De Ruyter, having leisurely reconnoitred his enemy, retired again to his hole, secure that he could not be attacked there as the wind was.

¹ *Op. cit.* III. i. p. 288, and Appendix VI. He gives sixty as the total, but the totals of the various rates given in the Appendix amount to fifty only. Sixty, however, must be correct.

Rupert continued his way, and, anchoring off the Texel, wrote to the King for further orders. Was he to send for the troops? Was he to cruise for the Dutch East India fleet? Or would the King change his mind and let him attack De Ruyter in the Schooneveld? As he waited there for an answer, his cruisers, on August 3, reported the Dutch at sea off Goree. Thereupon he sailed to get to the south of them, intending, if the wind were not fair for an attack, to take up a position in the middle of the North Sea opposite Lowestoft. But hard gales from west and south drove him northward and forced him to anchor 25 miles to the west of Schelling.

By the Dutch an immediate descent was expected, and the Prince of Orange had followed the fleet along the coast with his Guards to organise the local defence. He quickly satisfied himself that all was in order to repel an attack, and his only source of anxiety now was the East India convoy. It was believed that Rupert, when he disappeared from the Texel, had gone to intercept it. He therefore returned to the fleet, and ordered it, in a scene of wild enthusiasm, to proceed to sea and bring the enemy to action. No sooner was De Ruyter out than he was met with hard north-westerly gales, so that it was not till August 7 that he reached the Texel, and finding the enemy were not there he decided to go in and repair the damages of the storm. The move was quickly reported to Rupert, and on the 9th, so soon as the weather allowed, he made sail, to resume his old position before the Texel. He was there early on the 10th with the enemy in sight. He had the weather-gage, and everyone expected him to signal to engage; but instead of doing so he stood on inshore under topsails till it was too late to fight an action that day. The result was that he was out-manceuvred. At nightfall the leading ships were forced to tack for fear of the shoals, and in the dark De Ruyter, who had kept a press of sail and reached ahead, was able to slip inshore of him and secure the weather-gage.

As day broke, about four o'clock, he was seen about due east of the centre of the fleet, some three leagues away, standing out to engage, with the wind E by S veering to SE, as shown in the plate, in which we look about due east. The detached vessels between the two fleets with their courses brailed up are probably intended for the allied frigates making the long-distance signal for an enemy by lowering and hoisting their topsails. Two of them are heading for the Dutch, according to the instruction, to indicate their bearing.

During the night, we are told, the allied line had fallen into some disorder, as shown in the plate, and was standing towards the north. To restore it Rupert made the signal for the order of battle and Spragge in the Royal Prince, admiral of the blue,

and Harman, vice-admiral of the red, are seen repeating it with the union jack at the mizen-peak. On the extreme right, where the French line is most disordered, Martel in the van is also repeating it, though the flag is not coloured. Rupert, in the Royal Sovereign, then made the signal to tack, so as to stand towards the enemy. There was no explicit signal for this, but the tenth Fighting Instruction provided that if the van was to tack first the admiral would show the union at the fore, and if the rear the same at the mizen. It will be seen he is flying both at once (besides his union at the main) to express his meaning. Spragge is repeating the signal at the mizen, but none of the French flagships have yet done so.

Though the time is given on the face of the drawing as 4 o'clock, the signal to tack was not really made till a little before six, nearly two hours after the Dutch were sighted, also standing to the north. De Ruyter, as soon as he saw Rupert's move, also tacked to the southward and bore down to engage.

Second Part.—'About 6 o'clock.' (Plate V.)

As the Dutch bear down to engage, the wind has veered as far as SSE, and the allied fleet is standing SW by W.¹ Tromp, in the Golden Lion (84), heads straight for Spragge in the Royal Prince, who regardless of the fact that his chief is still holding on, has hove-to 'to abide him,' and his second ahead is doing the same. For this Spragge was severely blamed after his death, but his officers explained that he acted as he did for four reasons. 'Observing his squadron not in very good order, he laid his fore topsail to the mast, first that my Lord Ossory might be berthed further ahead of him and that Sir J. Kempthorne (who, though vice-admiral, had his division in the rear) might come a little nearer to unite the divisions.' Secondly, he thought by lying-to he would draw Tromp, his opposite number, to leeward of Rupert's division, which was 'fitted with prepared petards,' that is, some kind of spar-torpedo which Rupert had invented for use at close quarters.² Thirdly, because it had always been esteemed a point of honour for a fleet to leeward 'to stay and receive their enemy which they cannot otherwise meet.' There can be little doubt this was his real reason. It was a case of a duel not yet fought out with Tromp, 'his consort,' as he always

¹ For the wind and courses I have followed Narbrough's *Journal*, which is by far the most detailed and seamanlike.

² Rupert to the King, July 13, 1673: 'The bearer, Sir John Berry, was at the trial I made with my petards. . . . I shall say no more but that you may be assured that whatsoever vessel lies by the side of any ship and has the said petard on board has it in its power to blow up the other. What this may do as to your service I intend at the first occasion to try.'—*Dom. Cal.* xv. 434.

called him since their fierce bout together at the Schooneveld. Almost the last words he wrote in his 'Journal' the evening before the battle, when he saw Rupert had failed to bring the enemy to action, were: 'Tromp is now in the rear who had all day the van. He will, I hope, fall to my share in the blue squadron to-morrow.'¹

Tromp's vice-admiral, who was Sweers, is standing on to the northward, apparently to get abreast of his opposite number, Spragge's vice-admiral, Kempthorne, in the *St. Andrew*, 90, who also has the rear division. The object of the Dutch was probably to stretch the length of the British rear and prevent its doubling, as Jordan did at Sole Bay. Tromp's rear-admiral, De Haen, is conforming to De Ruyter's movement and is getting a good deal ahead of his opposite number, Lord Ossory, in the *St. Michael*, who, as we have seen, was astern of his proper station.²

Rupert, in the *Royal Sovereign*, is hugging the wind with all his division in order to close, but has not yet hoisted the signal to engage. Tromp, however, has a red flag at the mizen-top or mizen-shrouds; but the signification is not known, as a copy of the 'Memoir of Signals' which he issued has not come to hand.

The part of the plate which showed the van of the red squadron and the French is missing. This is to be the more regretted, for here lay what was tactically the most interesting part of the attack and the crux of the action. From the official English account, as well as those of D'Estrées and Martel, it is clear that De Ruyter adopted the form of attack which thenceforward became the orthodox one for an inferior fleet. It was practised and elaborated by Torrington at Beachy Head, praised by Père Hoste on Tourville's authority, and revived by Kempenfelt and Howe in their culminating reforms of English tactics. The idea was not to engage the whole of the enemy's line, but to concentrate on his rear—engaging as much of it as you could stretch, and sending a detachment against the enemy's leading division to prevent its doubling and getting the weather-gage. As Martel was leading, and was also the most dangerous flag-officer in the French squadron, the new form of attack suited the case exactly. So De Ruyter detached against him Cornelis Evertsen, vice-admiral of the van or Zeeland squadron, with his division of eight of the line. Banckers, with the rest of the Zeeland squadron, continued De Ruyter's line, reaching, so D'Estrées says, as far as the last two ships of his own division and engaging the whole of

¹ Lord Dartmouth afterwards established an article forbidding what Spragge had done (*Fighting Instructions*, N.R.S. xxix. p. 172).

² De Haen's flag is indistinct. He is just under the word 'second' in the legend.

Desardans'. Thus De Ruyter, measuring his man, coolly left D'Estrées out of action altogether, and was able to concentrate on the dangerous parts of the combined fleet. It is possible, therefore, that the famous method of attack was suggested by De Ruyter's knowledge that D'Estrées did not mean to fight unless he was forced to.

Third Part—'about 7 or 8 o'clock.' (Plate VI.)

FROM half-past seven to eight the action became general. Tromp and several ships of his division delivered a concentrated attack on Spragge, and 'for three hours together they lay braving one another with their topsails to the mast. Tromp was well seconded by several stout ships, from whence a gun was not fired at anybody but Sir Edward as long as they could bring any to bear.' His second astern were Captain Arthur Herbert (afterwards Lord Torrington), in the Cambridge, 66, and his second ahead, Captain John Hayward, in the Royal Charles; while Edward Russell (of La Hogue fame) was near by in the Phoenix, and also, as one of the pencil diagrams shows, the St. George, Lion, and Rainbow. So hot was Tromp's attack that by half-past eight Herbert had to take the Cambridge out of the line for a time to repair damages. Yet, so the Dutch say, though the duel lasted three and a half hours, Tromp during all that time had not a single man wounded—'a miracle which could be no mere chance, but a special direction of Divine Providence.' At the same time, however, they note the English gunnery was very slow and bad. Near by, an English fire-ship has been set on fire by the enemy's shot. Kempthorne, on the left, is heavily engaged with Sweers; and Ossory, to the right of Spragge, with De Haen. Both have hove-to in conformity with Spragge, and as Rupert holds on, a gap is opening between the blue and red squadrons.

In the red squadron Rupert's and Chicheley's divisions are engaged with De Ruyter and both his flags, which would look as though Harman with the red van division was engaged, as Rupert claimed, with the rear of Banckers's squadron. Indeed, Banckers's flag is seen very little ahead of Harman.

In contrast with this hard fighting in the rear and centre, D'Estrées's ship is seen well to leeward and in the rear of his squadron firing at long range between two of his own ships. Desardans, who was engaged with Banckers's centre, is lost in the smoke. On the extreme right Martel is seen trying to weather Evertsen's division, which was still holding him.

Fourth Part.—'About 10 or 12 o'clock.' (Plate VII.)

WITH this plate begins the second phase of the action. The wide margin of time the artist indicates is due to the fact that about ten o'clock a fog came up with drizzling rain, so that no one could see what was going on for nearly an hour, and when it cleared a great change had come over the field.

Owing to Spragge's and Tromp's long duel, hove-to, the gap between the red and blue had widened out; the rear squadrons of the two fleets were fighting practically a separate action. Both admirals had had to shift their flags. On the left Tromp's *Golden Lion* is drifting nearly dismantled. The *Royal Prince*, in the same condition, has also drifted to leeward of Tromp's division. About eleven o'clock, says an officer in the *Prince*, Spragge had to bear out of the line to repair his rigging. The *Royal Charles* and other ships made sail and took his place, thus getting to windward of Tromp, 'and my Lord Ossory and they, with the help of a fire-ship that was just going to lay Tromp on board, put him and his division quite to leeward of us a little before 12.o.' Ossory is shown doing this in one of the rough pencil diagrams. Brandt says Tromp had a hairbreadth escape, and was only saved by the extraordinary skill and valour of his first captain, an Irishman called Thomas Tobias, 'a great lover of liberty.' Having now got Tromp to leeward of him, Spragge, who was still in the *Prince* and had repaired his rigging, sent word to Ossory that he meant to use the advantage to come yard-arm to yard-arm with Tromp, who hitherto had refused really close action. But no sooner was his boat away with the message than his main-mast and mizen went by the board, and he had to shift to the *St. George*, the nearest large ship. No sooner was this done than Tromp in his new ship, the *Comet Star*, regardless of the danger he ran, made a desperate attempt to capture the helpless *Prince*. But Kempthorne as usual was in the right place. During the fog the wind had veered to about S by W and had thrown both lines into complete disorder. Kempthorne was forced to leeward of the blue centre; but he is seen here in the foreground, standing close-hauled till he reaches far enough to tack and get his division between Tromp and his prey.

Hitherto De Ruyter had not been engaged with Rupert. That honour had fallen to Vice-Admiral Van Nes, who had been so roughly handled that he had to leave the line. De Ruyter, as the fog lifts, is making for Rupert, and in doing so cuts off Chicheley's division, which in the fog and shift of wind had been thrown to leeward and astern of Rupert's. In this way he was able to bring about a formidable concentration round the *Prince* and his seconds. From the French the British admiral received

no support. According to the official 'Relation of the White Squadron,' Martel was unable to weather Evertsen. D'Estrées therefore 'resolved to bear through them, and in effect broke through the enemy's line between 11 and 12, and weathered all except Banckers.' Well as this sounds, it is clear from the other accounts that all he did was to tack through the gap between Banckers's division and Evertsen's. Seeing himself cut off, Evertsen promptly went about to rejoin his squadron; and Martel says he weathered him and forced him down to D'Estrées, but that D'Estrées, instead of trying to cut the Dutch off, merely saluted them with a few long shots, and then taking Martel with him stood away to the eastward. For a while it seems Banckers followed with his squadron, but seeing the French going clear out of action he went about and rejoined De Ruyter, so that Rupert with his own and Harman's division ahead of him had to bear the brunt of nearly the whole of De Ruyter's and Banckers's two squadrons.

Fifth Part.—'Between 1 and 2 o'clock.' (Plate VII.)

ACCORDING to Narbrough, between 12 and 1 the wind had veered to about south-west, with the result that the Dutch have been thrown to leeward, and the general movement is roughly westward. The whole blue squadron is to leeward of the red, and the red of the white; all ships ahead of Rupert are to windward of him and those astern to leeward.

On the left Kempthorne has tacked and, followed by the whole division, has thrust his flagship between Tromp and the Royal Prince. As his captains came up they formed round Tromp and quickly forced him to give up his attempt. Ossory has lost his mizen-topmast and fore-topsail, but is still holding his own. Two or three of Sweers's ships are seen falling out of the line disabled, and about this time Sweers himself was killed and his division fairly dominated.

At the same time the British suffered a much more serious loss. As soon as Spragge had hoisted his flag in the St. Michael he had attempted to force her astern to save his old ship from Tromp. In doing so he lost his fore-topmast. He also found that his new crew, being mostly 'unacquainted with sea service, did not stand to their guns with that courage he expected.' With such a ship he felt he could never 'decide the old quarrel between him and his consort,' and he resolved to shift his flag to the Royal Charles. Instead of leaving his flag flying, as it will be seen Tromp had done, he took it with him in his boat, and the result was that before he was a cable's length away he was in a storm of shot. In vain they begged him to go aboard

the Dreadnought frigate and reach the Royal Charles more safely; 'but scorning to be governed by arguments of fear, and hating the delay which that shifting might cause,' he refused. A round shot quickly sank the boat, and though his lieutenant and coxswain kept him afloat—for he could not swim—he was dead when a boat from the Bristol picked them up.¹ Deprived of its quixotic chief, Spragge's division, or what is left of it, is making to rejoin Rupert.

On the right Rupert is seen extricating himself from De Ruyter's concentration, covered by Legge in the Royal Katherine, who is engaging the Dutch admiral. Rupert's object was to run down to Chicheley, his vice-admiral, who is seen trying to beat up to his rescue, while Van Nes's division, that had cut him off, is trying to prevent him. The French, regardless of Rupert's danger, are still holding away, which they did, as all accounts agree, for 'five glasses'—that is, two hours and a half.

Sixth Part.—'About 3 and 4 o'clock.' (Plate VIII.) IX

WHAT may be called the third phase of the action has begun. When about two o'clock Rupert had rejoined Chicheley, he says, he saw the blue squadron about three leagues to leeward firing feebly, and he therefore determined to carry on and go to its relief. De Ruyter was already following his movement, and the two fleets ran down abreast of each other within cannon shot, but without firing a gun. The French at last had gone about, and were following the British at a distance.

Ahead and somewhat to leeward of Rupert (the wind was still at SW) are Chicheley and the remains of his division with two vessels of the blue squadron. The narrative attributed to Rupert says he saw them there as he came up and fired a gun for them to bear up to him, but the signal was not obeyed. The vessels round Chicheley, however, seem clearly to be heaving-to. The rest of the blue squadron appears to be standing on to meet him, though Rupert says that when he got up about four o'clock both Kempthorne and Ossory were repairing their rigging. Of the Royal Prince he says merely that he saw her entirely disabled; but, as the drawing shows, Tromp was making another attempt to capture or destroy her in concert with Sweers's flagship and others of his squadron. 'After two close engagements to leeward,' says the officer who was aboard of her, 'in one of which the Vice-Admiral Kempthorne was our rescue, the third time he [Tromp] weathered us, being about four o'clock, and came within his ship's length of our side, where he found all the guns of our

¹ For the effect of this incident on the Instructions see *Fighting Instructions* (N.R.S. xxix.), p. 162, note.

